



Editorial

1st scientific symposium on Health and Climate Change, Italian National Institute of Health, 3–5th December 2018, Rome, Italy



Dear Colleagues,

I'm glad and proud to inform you that on 3–5th December 2018, the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), located in Rome, will host the first international scientific symposium on Health and Climate Change.

The general objective of the Symposium is to promote an intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach to estimate, and to prevent, climate change related events as well as to prepare the authorities to put in place measures to reduce adverse health effects.

Climate change is becoming an increasingly urgent issue and the application of measures and actions to mitigate the impact on environment and human health are needed at all levels; for this reason the symposium will bring together several national and international actors (e.g. Universities, Scientific Institutions, Hospitals, Local Authorities, stakeholders), involved in different fields, with the aim to define a series of actions that can contribute to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The following is just a partial list of climate change related events occurring worldwide and for which urgent measures must be taken:

- The increase of the global mean surface temperature
- The rise of the global average sea level,
- The shrinking of the Arctic sea ice,
- The retreat of mounting glaciers,
- The acidification of the ocean waters,
- The increase of flooding, water scarcity and heat waves.

The impacts and consequences of these events on human health are dramatic, WHO states that 1) vector-borne diseases will increase with more humidity and heat, 2) food production will be destabilized by drought, 3) air pollution will lead to more allergies and asthma, 4) warmer waters and flooding will increase the risk of water-borne diseases. WHO estimates that climate changes are expected to cause an additional 250,000 deaths worldwide per year between 2030 and 2050.

Climate changes threaten our health whether you live in a rural village, on a small island, in coastal areas or a big city; everyone is at risk.

In this context it is important to recognize and highlight the signals that our planet is sending us, in particular our ecosystems that are closely connected with the wellbeing and health status of populations. The signals of ecosystem alteration or deterioration must be considered as an alarm by the policy makers to apply prevention measures to protect human health. WHO states indeed that a new perspective is required which focuses on ecosystems and on the recognition that long-term good health in human populations relies, above all, on the continued stability and functioning of the biosphere's life-supporting systems.

The protection of human health from climate changes requires management at many levels, from the scientific assessment of the hazards and exposures for the human populations to the social, economic and

policy aspects. The strategy elaborated by the European Union on adaptation to climate changes is an example of concrete actions to be implemented. The strategy aims to make Europe more climate-resilient; by taking a coherent approach and providing for improved coordination, it has the aim to enhance the preparedness and capacity of all governance levels to respond to the impacts of climate change.

In our country (Italy) we have experienced unusually frequent or severe events that could be attributed to climate changes such as river flooding, water scarcity, fires, coastal erosion, appearance of invasive species, heat waves and other effects and we think that the following actions are useful and urgent.

- The adaptation strategy must be applied at all governance levels
- Strong support must be provided to research on adaptation to climate changes to bridge the gaps in the knowledge of effects on ecosystems and health
- Adaptation policies must be coordinated
- Adaptation actions based on an ecosystem-based approach and use of green infrastructure must be implemented
- Early warning systems must be established
- Harmonization and collaboration between the health and environmental sector must be improved

For all the above mentioned reasons the topics included in the Symposium are intersectoral and include, *inter alia*, environment and health, communicable and non-communicable diseases, food security, zoonoses, green economy, migration, mental health, ecosystems and health, drinking waters, healthier cities, air quality, blue-green space, innovative tools.

At the end of the Symposium a Declaration (Rome declaration-Carta di Roma) will be drawn up in which a series of actions and recommendations, discussed and shared by all the participants, will be delivered to the policy makers and all the stakeholders involved in the management of climate changes.

The International Scientific Committee involved in the organization is made up of experts recognized worldwide for their scientific and policy contribution in relation to the protection of human health and the environment.

I really hope that this event can add to the precious work already being carried out in this field and contribute to promote a series of actions that are strongly needed to fight the effects of climate changes.

For further information: <https://healthclimate2018.iss.it/>.

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